

IMPROVED HOUSING PLANS.

ARCHITECTS AT WORK ON DRAWINGS

FOR A BUILDING TO COVER A BLOCK.

Just now in the city of New-York a number of architects are buying hand and brain with a problem of far-reaching importance. While these men, trained abilities, are thus working, some hundreds of thinking men and women are waiting anxiously and eagerly for the result, for upon that hinges the answer to the question of how the "lower million" of the future shall live. To those students of modern city life who have familiarized themselves with the cramped wretchedness, the squalor and the evil that abound in the tenement jungles of this great city, this question comes with monstrous emphasis, and seems to demand an answer, and that speedily. When a plain, hard-handed member of the countless army of toiler suffers can face a public meeting and speak with rugged eloquence and truth of the "sporadic philanthropy" of the hour, humanitarianism is bound to listen and to heed.

One result of this thinking and waiting is embodied in the following public building, which is before them. This

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voted a large part of his time to a close study of efforts to ameliorate tenement-house evils, and he found an especially fruitful field in London, where speculation has given place to practical knowledge that improved housing philanthropy gives a return, first in moral elevation, and second, in a financial way. In other words, it is the kind of philanthropy that is self-sustaining and therefore lasting. Although the Housing Council was composed of clean and healthful men for his family. He has to pay more than he paid formerly for discomfort and misery, from which there was no way of escape. He is independent, for he appreciates that his rental is profitable to the investors. These facts were forcibly demonstrated at the conference by Professor Gould. A good many prominent men and women took notes to aid their thinking, and soon afterward many of them joined in declaring: "It is time now for us to do something practical and lasting, to begin at the beginning that shall serve as an example for people of the other large cities of the country to follow." Thereupon the Improved Housing Council formulated its conditions for the competition in which many leading architects are engaged.

To comply with the terms of the competition the various plans must be in the hands of the Housing Council on or before May 11. This date was fixed upon for the reason that the council hope to be able to have ground secured by that time on which to build the first structure, and work will be begun at once. Ah! that is the question of this new building? You ask. Ah! that is a question a good many persons interested in reality would like to know. The Tribune reporter asked the same question of Professor Gould in the course of a long conversation on the subject, and he laughingly assented to the proposition that it will not be found on Murray Hill or fronting on Central Park.

A WHOLE CITY BLOCK TO BE BUILT ON.

Wherever the site may be chosen, it will be one

tax the industry and skill of the competing architects to the utmost, for the intention is to secure a city block if possible, and to cover it with the most profitable buildings. The plans for the competition designs are asked for "an entire city block," measuring 200x400 feet, or thirty-two city lots. The plot to be chosen is to be bounded by the avenues on the short sides and by the cross streets on the long sides. The object of the competition is stated to be "to obtain a satisfactory type of plan adapted to the conditions which prevail in New-York."

The first notable thing observed in a study of the plans is the disappearance of the word "tenement" from the Housing Commission's dictionary. The term of designation is "model apartment-houses." This is a move in the right direction. The plans must be in accord certainly with the New-York Building law. Not more than 10 per cent of the total area of the land is to be occupied, the rest being left vacant for light and air. Not more than 15 per cent of the area of the ground floor can be taken up for walls, partitions, corridors, closets, and other parts used in common. The clear rentable space on every floor above the ground floor must be equal at least to 55 per cent of the total area of the land. No courts enclosed on all sides can be figured to contain less than 900 square feet, and they must be as nearly square as possible. There must be no wells or light shafts, and all windows must open directly upon the street or air. All staircases and corridors must be lighted by windows or skylights in all apartments.

SAFEGUARDS AGAINST FIRE.

The compartments must be separated by unperforated fire walls extending from ground to roof. Each compartment must have its own fireproof staircase inclosed with brick work and a separate entrance from the street. Each compartment, and each suite of apartments must have its own water-closet opening directly upon the outer air. Every room of a suite must be private. Every living-room is to contain not less than 144 square feet, and every bedroom must contain at least seventy square feet of floor space. The plans call for a building on these conditions six stories in height, the ground floors on the avenues arranged for stores having ceilings eleven feet high in the clear. Ceilings of apartments are to be eight feet six inches in the clear. Each suite of rooms must be provided with a sink and a place for a range. The apartments must be in suites of two, three and four rooms.

Such a summary of conditions aside from particular instruction as to the manner in which drawings are to be furnished. Even the layman can glean more than a superficial notion of the problem which the council has set for the architect. It is admirable. It is worthy of note, too, that no prize will be given. The successful architect may be appointed by the committee to design the Model Apartment-Houses, but even in this there is no

While the members of the Housing Council feel that this venture on so large a scale is experimental, yet it is necessary to go to London for a practical demonstration of the feasibility of it. One house is now being built at a cost of £10,000, and will be ready in a year for £15,000. A number of people combined in the purchase. The price was divided into two parts, one for the house and the other for the mortgage of £7,000 at 5 per cent. About one hundred and fifty dollars was expended in repairs and putting the place in order. Thousands of refuse from the cellar. Before the council secured this house, at No. 33 East Twenty-second-st., it was almost deserted by Jews and Poles. The total rental derived from it now is \$132 a month. The running expenses are \$9 a month, leaving a profit of \$123 a month. The council is at the point of the whole movement appears in this, that this profit is not transferred to the pocket of the landlord. If all of the expense is

due to the interest account on the loan. Certainly that is nothing more than just, like the idea of the Housing Council is to apply nothing to a dividend fund.

FOR THE GENERAL GOOD

"We are not striving," said Professor Good, "for an exclusive right in the plan which we are simply trying to open a way through which we indulge the hope that others will talk. The plans that we hope that others will take up, we want to see them put into effect so secure will be open for the inspection and use of any one who may apply. This proposed building we trust will be merely a type to guide others in the way, and we shall throughout New-York City and other large cities of the country as well. We are willing to give the fruit of our experience for the good of all."

The council likewise has a scheme on hand for the building of a new school house at the corner of Broadway and West Street, which workmen can pay with the money they would ordinarily have to buy out in rent.

The officers of the Housing Council are: Richard Wattson Glider, chairman; W. Bayard Cutting, vice-chairman; William H. Tolman, secretary; Executive Committee, Samuel D. Babcock, chairman; R. Fulton Cutting, S. Nicholas Whittier, and W. Bayard Cutting. The council hopes to have two committees added to the working list shortly, one to be known as the Rental Committee and the other as the General Cleanliness of Existing Tenement-houses, and the other, which has not yet been named, which shall have charge of the construction of new tenement-houses. The erection of a residential club for use by the hundreds of young men who are living in hall beds

rooms and the lake over the city. These bedrooms are too small for comfort, and the occupant is driven to seek company and recreation on the streets and in neighborhood barrooms. The council think the ball bedroom young man is worth attention. His name is legion.